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# MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of  
interest to USDA management

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Issue #74

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CURRENT AFFAIRS  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PAPERWORK MANAGEMENT AWARD.....At a luncheon held on November 7 at the Sheraton-National Motor Hotel in Arlington, the Association of Records Managers and Administrators presented a Special Merit Award to Frank Gearde, Jr., Director of the Management Services Division, FNS.

Mr. Gearde has made significant contributions to improved paperwork management through simplified agency procedures. The uniform records management system will save about \$300,000 annually. Recommendations involving a nationwide mailing survey saved \$447,000 and improved forms requisitioning and inventory saved about \$48,000. Mr. Gearde was the only USDA employee to receive this award this year.

1978 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION.....The Conferees have completed action on the 1978 Supplemental Appropriation Bill (H. R. 9375) and have agreed to file a conference report. Decisions for USDA items in conference were as follows:

- ...FSQS - \$2,000,000 to implement the Governmentwide food quality assurance program.
- ...FCIC - \$30,000,000 for subscription to capital stock.
- ...FmHA - No additional farm ownership loans were authorized, although language was added to indicate that the Congress would consider a supplemental later in the fiscal year.
- ...SCS - \$30,000,000 for emergency watershed protection activities under Section 216.
- ...ASCS - \$36,600,000 for drought assistance programs.
- ...FS - \$1,836,000 for timber sales preparation.

The Conference report was filed November 8 and final action by both Houses is expected shortly after Congress returns. (Contact: Bob Barham, OBPE, ext. 76176)

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN.....As of November 4, USDA employees have reached 82% of the \$453,453 CFC goal. Over 65% of USDA employees have contributed \$369,731; an average of \$51.32.

Twelve agencies, and the Graduate School, have already met or exceeded their dollar goals: CSRS, EMSC, FAS, FCS, FGIS, FNS, NAL, OMF, OP, RDS, SEC and SRS. Employees of OMF have contributed 160% of their dollar goal. (Contact: G. F. Sedgwick, ARS, ext. 73801)

FLEXITIME IN USDA.....USDA agencies are showing increasing interest in the use of flexitime. ERS was the first agency in the Washington area to implement a form of flexitime and, after a trial period, the system has become permanent. Three more agencies - FS, FNS and APHIS - have now submitted proposals to introduce flexitime.

USDA policy provides that agencies must obtain clearance from the Office of Personnel before introducing any form of flexitime in the Washington metropolitan area. In addition, clearance from GSA is required. The FS, FNS and APHIS proposals have been approved by OP and are awaiting GSA approval. (Contact: J. Fred King, SEC, ext. 73291)

GSA PROPOSED SPACE POLICY.....October 27, GSA presented its proposed policy for acquiring space in the National Capital Region to the Assistant Secretaries Management Group. The major elements of the policy are:

1. Developing a 5-year housing plan by each agency.
2. Requiring that each agency recapture 10 percent of its current space assignment. This space would be used to satisfy near term needs for additional space.
3. Screening all agency requests to determine if the function needs to be in the National Capital Region.
4. Requiring a certification by the Assistant Secretary for Administration (or equivalent official) that any request for space count only positions that are within the ceilings approved by OBPE.

For the past several years, the Department has had a vigorous program to improve utilization of Headquarters space. Based on our achievement in that area, we feel the impact of this new GSA policy should be minimal. We have initiated a study of the impact of reorganization on our space requirements and requested that GSA begin implementing their new policy by detailing someone to USDA to assist in this effort. (Contact: Pete Gagnon, OO, ext. 75564)

WASHINGTON COMPUTER CENTER RELOCATION PLAN.....ADS and OO are developing plans to relocate the Washington Computer Center from the South Building to the Commonwealth Building in Rosslyn, Virginia. The Department of Defense is now vacating a computer facility at this location that can be easily modified to meet WCC requirements. GSA has taken action to acquire additional office space needed to satisfy the total WCC requirements. WCC is seeking an economical way to accomplish the move with little or no interruption in service to their users. No moving date has been established but it appears that, if the total space requirement is satisfied by GSA, the move will take at least 6 to 9 months. (Contact: Pete Gagnon, OO, ext. 75564)

OFFICE OF OPERATIONS AND FINANCE (O&F).....Acting Director Dennis Boyd has convened a steering committee and task force to assist in the development of an organization structure for O&F. The steering committee consists Ray Long, Leo Palensky, and Ed Alvarez; and the task force members are Dan Merritt, Jim Flint, Tom Gildea, and Dick Hadsell.

In carrying out the objectives of the reorganization announced by Secretary Bergland on October 5, 1977, O&F plans to have a formally approved organization structure by January 1, 1978. (Contact: Dick Hadsell, 00, ext. 73152)

FTS LONG-DISTANCE COST AND CALLING VOLUME.....According to figures furnished by the Office of Personnel, the number of permanent full-time employees of the Department of Agriculture has decreased by about 8% during the last 11 years--from 87,943 to 80,335. During the same period, the USDA's share of the FTS long-distance Intercity Voice Network cost has increased by 339%--from \$2.8 to \$12.3 million, and in calling volume by 400%--from 2.2 to 11 million completed calls.

Although there have been equipment, tariff, and salary increases during this period, the unit cost per call has remained relatively constant--\$1.24 in 1966, \$1.11 in 1977. The increased cost, therefore, stems primarily from increases in calling volume.

About 14% of all permanent full-time employees are located in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, and they originate 58% of USDA's total FTS traffic--about 6.4 million long-distance calls during FY 1977. That averages out to more than two long-distance calls per workday for each D.C. employee. The remaining 86% permanent full-time USDA employees are located in the field. They originate 42% of USDA's nationwide FTS calls--about 4.6 million calls during FY 1977, or one long-distance call per field employee every four workdays. Granting that the ready access to the FTS network by USDA employees might have been instrumental in reducing correspondence, official travel and full-time employment, a 400% increase in long-distance calling volume is still difficult to justify. Employees must be more frugal in the use of FTS service. FTS does not mean "Free Telephone Service." (Contact: Joe Godbout, 00, ext. 75225)

CONTRACT COMPLIANCE.....Federal contract compliance functions were phased out of the Department on October 1. The Procurements, Grants and Agreement Staff will act as Departmental liaison with the new compliance agencies; EPA, DoD, GSA and HUD. Discussions are being held to determine the effect on procurement offices. Appropriate regulations will be drafted and included in the AGPR's. (Contact: Dean Smith, 00, ext. 77527)



AUTOMATED MAILING LIST SYSTEM (AMLS).....The timetable for completion of the A-76 action on the AMLS has been revised to reflect a decision by the Procurement Division, 00, to use a two-step bid process. This method will require that technical proposals be submitted prior to a cost proposal and contractors will be evaluated using predetermined evaluation criteria. Acceptable bidders only will be allowed to submit cost proposals. The USDA bid (cost only) will be submitted at the time of the technical bid submission and will be kept in a safe until all cost bids are opened. The lowest cost bidder at the opening will be awarded the contract. This approach should substantially improve the Department's objectivity and credibility in this process. Based on a November 11 issue date, the bid opening and award will take place on January 23. If there is a change to a contractor, this should take place on April 1. (Contact: Tom Foster, 00, ext. 76867)

REAL PROPERTY WORKSHOPS.....The first of three scheduled USDA Real Property Workshops offered by Sterling Institute was held in Rosslyn on November 1-3. Agency support and interest for these workshops are high and critiques of the first sessions rated the course material as excellent. On-the-job value and the overall workshop were rated outstanding. The workshops cover leasing, handicapped requirements, facilities energy conservation and other real property areas of interest. Labor, HEW, and Treasury are also very interested in this program and, to our knowledge, nothing has ever been offered in this area of training before. USDA occupies over 45 million square feet of space and, with the cost of space rapidly increasing, competent and well trained people are required to negotiate and administer leases and the real property program. (Contact: Paul Denett, 00, ext. 75225)

BLANKET PURCHASE ARRANGEMENT (BPA).....BPA savings for FY 1977 exceeded \$275,000; a 43% increase over FY 1976. BPA's entitle agencies to quantity discounts while buying only one item per order. The largest savings were from Sharp Electronics, \$33,000, and Columbia Ribbons, \$23,000. (Contact: Dean Smith, 00, ext. 77527)

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY POSITIONS.....On November 4, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs reported, with an amendment, S1704 which would increase by two the number of Assistant Secretaries in USDA. (Contact: John Mottershead, OBPE, ext. 74654)